

Jon's Veterans First Act

TESTER'S IMPROVING VETERANS ACCESS TO CARE IN THE COMMUNITY ACT

Provider Agreements

Authorizes the VA to enter into agreements with community providers to provide care to veterans in a timely manner. This will allow the VA to work directly with community providers and no longer have to rely heavily upon HealthNet.

Budget Flexibility

Provides the VA with the funding flexibility it needs to steer veterans to the proper route of care.

Primary Payer

Establishes the VA as the primary payer under Choice, which will reduce out-of-pocket expenses for veterans and reduce administrative delays to care.

Prompt Pay

Establishes stronger standards for the timely reimbursement of community providers.

Continuum of Care

Improves the sharing of medical records between the VA and community providers.

TESTER'S DOCS FOR VETS ACT

Residencies

Builds a stronger pipeline of medical professionals into the VA through VA residency positions.

Leadership Vacancies

Seeks to address the leadership vacancies that remain prevalent across the VA, by bolstering the VA's ability to compete within the health care industry for top leaders.

Workforce

Addresses VA workforce shortages:

- Includes Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists in the VA's medical recruitment program.
- Makes mental health counselors with doctoral degrees eligible for federal employment.
- Bolsters pay for Physician Assistants and allows the VA to better compete for skilled PAs.
- Directs the VA to assess its ongoing efforts to address medical workforce shortages.

OTHER TESTER-BACKED PROVISIONS

Appeals

Allows vets to file a fully developed appeal that would be processed through a more streamlined process.

Homeless Veterans

Allows vets who receive housing vouchers through HUD-VASH & the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act to access the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program.

Caregivers

Increases resources for VA caregiver services and extends these services to veterans of all eras.

Opioids

Requires stronger opioid prescription guidelines and increases coordination regarding treatments for chronic pain. It also mandates consistent internal audits, GAO reviews, and reports to Congress on the use of opioids among veterans.

Toxic Exposure

Increases research into the health conditions of descendants of veterans exposed to toxins during war, particularly those exposed to Agent Orange during Vietnam.

Proper Burial

Allows the burial of cremated remains in Arlington National Cemetery for Women Air Force Service Pilots, Merchant Marines, and other active duty designees.

Survivor Benefits

Expedites the process by which VA provides survivor and burial benefits to recently widowed spouses of deceased veterans.

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY & OVERSIGHT

- Provides the VA with greater authority to discipline under-performing employees.
- Cuts benefits for senior executives convicted of serious misconduct.
- Shortens the time that VA employees have to respond to a removal but maintains a reasonable time for response and the right to appeal a decision.
- Lengthens the time that the Secretary can consider for firing for performance reasons from one to two years.
- Creates a VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection.
- Requires an in-depth assessment of senior executive training and appraisal.

U.S. SENATOR FOR MONTANA

JON TESTER